

Sabbatical Committee – Minority Report

There is one problem with the proposal as it currently stands, and that is with regards to the junior faculty leave.

The plan which was originally discussed was to allow junior faculty to have half of a sabbatical after 3 years (i.e. in their fourth year, or fifth), which would be a two course reduction for one semester, or the semester off with half pay. If they have external funding (at 1/2 of their salary for the semester), or are willing to take the pay cut, they could take the entire semester off for research. Following this leave, they would wait at least six additional years before applying for a full sabbatical.

In this case, they are not really borrowing against a future sabbatical, they are simply cashing in the first half of a sabbatical which they have accrued. Thus, requiring a wait of six years before re-applying for a normal sabbatical is fair.

This original proposal was subsequently modified, and as I see it, the modifications have introduced several problems. The first problem is one of equity. If junior faculty are able to take a full sabbatical early, which is my reading of the current proposal (100 % salary with a 2 course reduced load for one academic year or 1 semester with no teaching duties), then this really is borrowing against a full sabbatical for which they would normally not be eligible until after six years. Thus if this were the plan, I would argue that these awardees should wait until after 13 years to apply for a second sabbatical, just as faculty who wait until after six years for a first full sabbatical would have to do.

A second problem is one of return on investment. If a junior faculty member does not obtain tenure and leaves, CNU obtains no long term return on its junior faculty investment. The current proposal invests twice as much into the junior faculty leave, thus any lost return on investment will be double.

The final problem with this proposal is that it will be very expensive. A full sabbatical after three years is clearly twice as expensive as a half sabbatical, plus I believe there will be incredible demand for these early full sabbaticals, and incredible pressure to grant these once applied for. Why? Because tenure may depend on it. In fact it is easy to imagine that obtaining this sabbatical becomes an early tenure indicator. It is also easy to imagine a lawsuit over a tenure denial because the full one semester leave was not granted.

For these reasons I recommend the language in the sabbatical report regarding junior faculty leaves be modified to “a two course reduction for one semester or one semester off with half pay.”

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